

THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

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1. The public generally believes that all those who are in a position of power must be corrupt. You can do your best to reject corruption but no one will believe you.

2. Throughout my career I had rejected corruption. I did my best to show that I was not corrupt when I was the Prime Minister.

3. I did not live a lavish life. Yes, I built two houses but they were built with Government loans to which I was entitled and through borrowing from a bank. They were not expensive and I was able to pay the loans with my salary and allowance as Prime Minister. I don't owe anything to anyone since then.

4. Actually my pay was more than sufficient to support me and my family. It was sufficient because the Government provides me with housing, pay my electricity and water bills, make available to me several motor vehicles, even airplanes for my use.

5. I get paid allowances for moving around the country to do my work or even when taking holidays abroad.

6. The only thing I had to pay for is the food I and my family consumed and my clothing. Even this was not much as I get invited to functions where food was served.

7. I did not ask for scholarships for my children. I could afford to pay for their education. As Prime Minister, I earned more than ten times what I earned as a private medical practitioner.

8. I bought no shares except for 200 British American Tobacco shares which I bought before I became a member of Parliament. The only shares I bought after I joined the Government were those in Permodalan Nasional and other official funds when I launched those funds. But usually not more than 1,000 shares. The return was not big. I did not sell or buy these shares. They remain with the funds and they grow as I did not take dividends. I did not buy shares in the stock market.

9. My children were not allowed to do business with the Government. They were not even allowed to be involved in politics. Certainly not to join UMNO. Most of the business they did when I was Prime Minister were in foreign countries. I did not want to be accused of nepotism.

10. As President of UMNO I was often offered donations for the party. All those donations were given to UMNO. I kept nothing. In fact, I paid for all the campaigning for my own elections. In those days payments for party workers were small and affordable. The normal party allocation for the constituency during elections went to the division and was spent for its management and the conduct of the election. I paid for the cigarettes and nasi lemak occasionally.

11. As Prime Minister I received a lot of gifts. I did not regard them as given to me personally. I regarded them as gifts to the Office of Prime Minister. Accordingly, I registered them as properties of the Government, especially the motor cars. All these gifts are in the Galleria in Langkawi and in my old (Prime Minister's official) residence in Kuala Lumpur.

12. All these things I did and more to avoid being accused of corruption. But still, I am accused of being corrupt. In fact, many people believe that I have huge amounts of money stashed abroad. No evidence has been revealed that I had this great wealth. But that does not mean that it is not true that I did not have this wealth. It is just that I am said to be clever at hiding my great wealth.

13. This refusal to admit that I am not corrupt affects my efforts to clean up the country of corruption. When I try to campaign against corruption people became cynical. They just cannot believe I am sincere because apparently, I myself am so corrupt.

14. Yet this anti-corruption campaign is very important as I see how corruption is destroying the country. It has come to the stage when Governments can be bought through corruption. And when such a Government is installed, Government funds would be stolen and the country just cannot develop. It will become poorer and poorer and would fail as a nation.

15. The people will suffer as the cost of dealing with the Government would become prohibitive and service would deteriorate. Investments would decline and job creation would not meet the demand of the unemployed workers.

16. So what, some would say. Many countries would be like us.

17. Well, if we are ready and willing to become a failed country it is okay.

18. But we would be looked down upon and would be begging from the rich. We cannot stand tall and be respected.

19. Because of this, I think it is important to elect Governments that are not corrupt.

20. Generally the people do not trust politicians. They believe all of them are corrupt. So, many people have decided not to vote in elections.

21. If people do not vote in elections, the corrupt politicians will win as they would bribe their corrupt supporters to vote for them. Then the Government of Malaysia would continue to be led by corrupt politicians.

22. But I believe most people do not want corruption to cause us to become a failed nation. We want to become a successful nation. For this to happen we have to fight against corruption.

23. How do we fight corruption. We can campaign to instill in the minds of people the rejection of corruption. We can explain the harm that corruption can do to us, to our society, and to our nation. We must make people be aware that corruption is not only about civil servants accepting bribes for the service they are expected to give, but corruption can result in crooks bribing to win elections and form Governments or members of Parliament being bribed to bring down an elected Government and replacing it with corrupt Government.

24. In Malaysia we have reached the stage where crooks can buy members of elected Governments so as to bring down the Government and replace it with corrupt members.

25. By this time the whole population will become corrupt as the corrupt Government will use Government funds to give citizens money to buy support. The cost of doing business would be high, few will invest and businesses will make little profits. With that taxes will not yield enough revenue for the Government. Pay for Government employees, would be reduced. Their purchases would decrease. Retail businesses would suffer, lose profit, pay less tax and Government funds would be unable to sustain the services for the people.

26. The country will become poorer and poorer and will be forced to borrow money or beg for aid. The decline of the country would be continuous and all the people would suffer.

27. Clearly, if we do not want these to happen. If we do not want to become beggars, we must reject and rid our country of corruption.

28. For this we must reject corrupt people from winning elections and forming Governments.

29. We must monitor closely the performance of Governments. There will be false accusation. These will only be accepted if materially proven. It is common for the corrupt to deflect accusations against them by accusing their accusers of being equally corrupt.

30. The struggle against corruption is a holy struggle. In this struggle, we must all be willing to make sacrifices.

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